

Dear Fellow Redeemed,

Many calendars include Jewish Festival dates. If you have one of them you will notice that tomorrow is Rosh Hashanah, which is the Jewish New Year. Strictly speaking Rosh Hashanah is not a biblical festival but it coincides with the Old Testament Feast of Trumpets. It is the first day of the Jewish month Tishri which is the seventh month in their church year. The number seven is the number of God's covenant. So the seventh month is an especially holy month with three major festivals. The month was ushered in with a day of blowing of trumpets announcing the coming of our King. The tenth day of the month was the Day of Atonement. Then the Feast of Tabernacles began on the fifteenth day of the month. Since the Jewish day begins in the evening, the Feast of Trumpets actually begins this evening at 6:00.

Today we will consider how this festival relates to us.

The Trumpet Calls – Will You Listen?

The first mention of trumpets in the Bible is in Exodus 19 when God appeared to His people at Mt. Sinai to give them His law. Let's review that account.

Exodus 19:10-13, 16-20. *“10 Then the Lord said to Moses, “Go to the people and consecrate them today and tomorrow, and let them wash their clothes. 11 And let them be ready for the third day. For on the third day the Lord will come down upon Mount Sinai in the sight of all the people. 12 You shall set bounds for the people all around, saying, ‘Take heed to yourselves that you do not go up to the mountain or touch its base. Whoever touches the mountain shall surely be put to death. 13 Not a hand shall touch him, but he shall surely be stoned or shot with an arrow; whether man or beast, he shall not live.’ **When the trumpet sounds long, they shall come near the mountain.**” ...*

*16 Then it came to pass on the third day, in the morning, that there were thunderings and lightnings, and a thick cloud on the mountain; and the **sound of the trumpet was very loud**, so that all the people who were in the camp trembled. 17 And Moses brought the people out of the camp to meet with God, and they stood at the foot of the mountain. 18 Now Mount Sinai was completely in smoke, because the Lord descended upon it in fire. Its smoke ascended like the smoke of a furnace, and the whole mountain quaked greatly. 19 And when the **blast of the trumpet sounded long and became louder and louder**, Moses spoke, and God answered him by voice. 20 Then the Lord came down upon Mount Sinai, on the top of the mountain. And the Lord called Moses to the top of the mountain, and Moses went up.”*

Trumpets were often used to herald the coming of a king. There at Mt. Sinai the King of all Creation came to speak to His chosen people. He had just rescued them from slavery in Egypt, and now He came to give them His law. His arrival was announced by the sound of a trumpet coming from the mountain. But the trumpet sound was more than announcing God's presence, it was calling the people to gather before Him to listen as He spoke His commandments for all to hear.

-I- The Trumpet Calls to Hear God's Word.

So on this Feast of Trumpets, the blowing of the trumpets called the people to gather to hear God's word and worship. The very fearful display of God's presence and holiness on Mt. Sinai in the fire and smoke, the thunder and lightning, the earthquake and the sound of the loud trumpet demonstrated that God was very serious about His Word and His law.

So on this Feast of Trumpets we are reminded of the great importance of hearing God's word. And of course we need to accept the Bible as God's word. Our Gospel Reading for today is found in the Gospel of **Matthew 21:23-27**

23 Now when He came into the temple, the chief priests and the elders of the people confronted Him as He was teaching, and said, "By what authority are You doing these things? And who gave You this authority?" 24 But Jesus answered and said to them, "I also will ask you one thing, which if you tell Me, I likewise will tell you by what authority I do these things: 25 The baptism of John—where was it from? From heaven or from men?"

And they reasoned among themselves, saying, "If we say, 'From heaven,' He will say to us, 'Why then did you not believe him?'" 26 But if we say, 'From men,' we fear the multitude, for all count John as a prophet." 27 So they answered Jesus and said, "We do not know." And He said to them, "Neither will I tell you by what authority I do these things."

It was very obvious by Jesus' teaching and miracles that His authority came from God the Father. But like many bible scholars today, the Priests and Elders in Jesus' day did not believe that, nor did they believe that John the Baptist received his Baptism and teaching from God in heaven. The trumpet calls us to listen to God's word and accept it and believe it as God's word. We still hold on to that truth, even though most people today no longer believe it.

Let's rise and join in confessing our faith in Apostles Creed.

Apostles Creed:

One can hardly think of God's giving His law without remembering how miserably we have failed to keep His law. When God called to His people at Mt. Sinai, all the people agreed to His covenant and promised, "All that the LORD has spoken we will do." However, they couldn't get past the very first commandment. While God was still visible on the mountain as He gave further commands to Moses, they made a golden calf to worship.

Do you wonder how could they do that? I do too. But are we any better? We haven't gotten past the first commandment a single day in our lives. We have failed to "Love the Lord our God with ALL our heart, with ALL our soul and with ALL our mind and with ALL our strength." Any and every sinful thought proves that God is not first in our hearts and lives. There are many things that we "worship" in our hearts instead of God. God spoke through the prophet Joel reminding them of the terrifying consequences of such disobedience. He said, "Blow the trumpet in Zion, and sound an alarm in My holy mountain! Let all the inhabitants of the land tremble; for the day of the LORD is coming, for it is at hand: a day of darkness and gloominess, a day of clouds and thick darkness." Joel 2:1-2 So we also see that

-II- The Trumpet Calls to Repentance

Did you notice that the blowing of the trumpets on the first day of the seventh month was accompanied by offering Burnt sacrifices? The Feast of Trumpets was a time to reflect on their sinfulness and failure to keep God's commandment and to come to God in repentance to receive His forgiveness. In fact the Feast of Trumpets began ten days of self-examination and repentance. These were the most solemn days of the year for Israel.

God's Word is calling us to repentance from beginning to end. His law shows us our sin and the consequences of sin. We see many examples of how those who continue in their sins without repentance face the fierce wrath of God. We saw that last week in the account of Sodom and Gomorrah. But it is God's grace in the Gospel that calls us to repent. His promise to forgive gives us the confidence to come to Him in repentance to receive His grace and forgiveness.

We see that in our next Scripture Reading from Ezekiel. God's law convicts but it is His Gospel that draws us to God for His forgiveness and life.

Old Testament Reading: Ezekiel 18:1-4, 25-32

“The word of the Lord came to me again, saying, 2 “What do you mean when you use this proverb concerning the land of Israel, saying: ‘The fathers have eaten sour grapes, and the children’s teeth are set on edge’? 3 “As I live,” says the Lord God, “you shall no longer use this proverb in Israel. 4 “Behold, all souls are Mine; The soul of the father as well as the soul of the son is Mine; The soul who sins shall die.”

25 “Yet you say, ‘The way of the Lord is not fair.’ Hear now, O house of Israel, is it not My way which is fair, and your ways which are not fair? 26 When a righteous man turns away from his righteousness, commits iniquity, and dies in it, it is because of the iniquity which he has done that he dies. 27 Again, when a wicked man turns away from the wickedness which he committed, and does what is lawful and right, he preserves himself alive. 28 Because he considers and turns away from all the transgressions which he committed, he shall surely live; he shall not die. 29 Yet the house of Israel says, ‘The way of the Lord is not fair.’ O house of Israel, is it not My ways which are fair, and your ways which are not fair?

30 “Therefore I will judge you, O house of Israel, every one according to his ways,” says the Lord God. “Repent, and turn from all your transgressions, so that iniquity will not be your ruin. 31 Cast away from you all the transgressions which you have committed, and get yourselves a new heart and a new spirit. For why should you die, O house of Israel? 32 For I have no pleasure in the death of one who dies,” says the Lord God. “Therefore turn and live!”

Let us join in confessing our sins. But more than just reading some words here today, let us each devote every day this week to an honest examination of our own hearts and lives. Just as the Jews of the Old Testament began ten days of soul searching and repentance, let us truly examine our hearts according to God’s commandments in preparation for receiving God’s amazing grace in the Lord’s Supper next Sunday.

Confession of Sins:

Hymn: 326

Why do we struggle so with sin? Why is it so hard for us to live in righteousness? We know what is right, and as the Apostle Paul says, we want to do what is right. And yet we still succumb to anger, envy, lust, pride, and they constantly lead us to all manner of sins of action. Why? Because we are sinners. When we understand that it makes the joy of our forgiveness all the greater. We truly see and rejoice in the grace and mercy of God when we feel our desperate situation.

Therefore trumpets were also used in the praise of God and rejoicing in His mercy and goodness. “Praise Him with the sound of the trumpet.” Psalm 150:3 Psalm 98 says, “Shout joyfully to the Lord, all the earth; Break forth in song, rejoice, and sing praises. Sing to the Lord with the harp, with the harp and the sound of a psalm, with trumpets and the sound of a horn; Shout joyfully before the Lord, the King.” Psalm 98:4-6 Why such joyful songs of praise? The same Psalm tells us in verses 2&3 “The Lord has made known His salvation; His righteousness He has revealed in the sight of the nations. He has remembered His mercy and His faithfulness to the house of Israel; All the ends of the earth have seen the salvation of our God.”

-II- The Trumpet Calls to Rejoice!

The Day of Atonement on the 10th day of the seventh month, was a very somber day of repentance. It was the culmination of 10 days of considering the seriousness of their sin. Yet it was a most wonderful day because it vividly pictures the grace of God and how we are forgiven and received by God. It was a vivid picture of how the blood of Jesus Christ has made atonement for our sins. It was a satisfactory payment to satisfy the justice of God. Therefore our sins are taken away

from us and cast far away never to condemn us again. What great reason to rejoice! What greater reason for us to rejoice and praise Him. Let us receive with believing and joyful hearts the Absolution, the complete forgiveness and cleansing from our sins.

Absolution and Praise:

-III- The Trumpet Calls to Glory

Five days after the Day of Atonement on the 15 of Tishri, the Feast of Tabernacles began. This was a seven day long feast where they lived in booth for seven days. It was also known as the Final Ingathering. It was a celebration of the final harvest when all the crops were brought in. God used it as a picture of the final harvest of souls on the last day.

That day will also be ushered in with trumpets. Jesus said, “They will see the Son of Man coming on the clouds of heaven with power and great glory. And He will send His angels with a great sound of a trumpet, and they will gather together His elect from the four winds, from one end of heaven to the other.” Mat. 24:30-31. The Apostle Paul also says, “For the Lord Himself will descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of an archangel, and with the trumpet of God. And the dead in Christ will rise first.” 1 Thess. 4:16

Christ’s coming will be a dreadful day for all who have not put their trust in Him. What horror to realize too late that Jesus truly is the Son of God and our Savior. But for all those who have trusted in His death and resurrection for the forgiveness of their sins, those who “have washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb,” for them it will be the most glorious joyful day. It will be the day when “God will wipe away every tear from their eyes; there shall be no more death, nor sorrow, nor crying. There shall be no more pain, for the former things have passed away.” It will be the day when we will enter into glory and see God face to face and live with Him forever in heavenly bliss.

When we live in that faith and have the cleansing of our sins, we are ready for that last day when our Savior will return. And the trumpet call on that day will truly be a call to glory. Therefore the Apostle Peter says, “But the day of the Lord will come as a thief in the night, in which the heavens will pass away with a great noise, and the elements will melt with fervent heat; both the earth and the works that are in it will be burned up. Therefore, since all these things will be dissolved, **what manner of persons ought you to be in holy conduct and godliness, looking for and hastening the coming of the day of God.**” 2 Peter 3:10-12

Our final Scripture reading reminds us to live with the mind of Christ. **Philippians 2:1-4, 14-18**

“Therefore if there is any consolation in Christ, if any comfort of love, if any fellowship of the Spirit, if any affection and mercy, 2 fulfill my joy by being like-minded, having the same love, being of one accord, of one mind. 3 Let nothing be done through selfish ambition or conceit, but in lowliness of mind let each esteem others better than himself. 4 Let each of you look out not only for his own interests, but also for the interests of others.”

14 Do all things without complaining and disputing, 15 that you may become blameless and harmless, children of God without fault in the midst of a crooked and perverse generation, among whom you shine as lights in the world, 16 holding fast the word of life, so that I may rejoice in the day of Christ that I have not run in vain or labored in vain. 17 Yes, and if I am being poured out as a drink offering on the sacrifice and service of your faith, I am glad and rejoice with you all. 18 For the same reason you also be glad and rejoice with me.”

May we truly seek to live for Him who died for us and rose again that we might belong to Him forever.

Amen.